

NEWS AND NOTES OF PLAYS AND PLAYERS

Why Not the Factory System in Play-Making?

By Rebecca Drucker

We Americans always respond with keen delight to proof of the success of plain business methods, especially in professions where business methods are not the tradition. An artist who can drive a good bargain or a writer who is sharp about his royalties is a particular feather in the cap of plain, level-headed people when goaded to irritation by the queer, heretical notions of those who affect the arts. It somehow gives us a sense of security about our plays to find a playwright so firmly established in respectability that he is quoted in a brisk office building and accepted on terms of equality by such really useful people as stock brokers, real estate dealers and advertising agents.

There is a substantial reassurance about Samuel Shipman's office—its efficient filing cases, its neat secretary and its mahogany. The hazards of inspiration are reduced to a minimum here, as they should be in any well regulated business. Samuel Shipman is a small man, with blunt features and alert eyes, and one may read his success in these contrasts. They spell persistence and shrewdness—the staple qualities of our business romance. The marksmanship which has shot into view the S. R. O. signs at the box office of "Friendly Enemies," "East Is West" and "The Woman in Room 13" may have the appearance of dash and impetuosity, but it is really the result of fifteen years of cautious experimentation.

Samuel Shipman made the simple decision to be a playwright and then complicated it by deciding to be a successful one. That meant the slow and painful making over of all the conceptions with which he had started out. It delayed his recognition until this year—time spent as much in unlearning as in learning. However, the interest on his investment is being paid in the huge royalties he now draws. He made some preliminary skirmishes at writing plays before he entered college, when he was one of a youthful group that met in the John Davidson school. The John Davidson school was an educational project started on the East Side, which designed to fill in the cultural background of ambitious young East Siders, of whom Shipman was one. His first play was called "Justice," and it satirized a daily scene in a police court. Its production in the Educational Alliance, on East Broadway, brought him into touch with Jacob Gordin, the famous Yiddish playwright, who urged him to develop his talent. Shipman had just then entered Columbia University, and he at once enrolled himself in Clayton Hamilton's drama course. Soon afterward he brought to Clayton Hamilton's attention Gordin's play, "Kreutzer Sonata," of which he proposed making an English adaptation. The adaptation was a little more than a young freshman could handle alone, and Hamilton's interest having been aroused both by Gordin's play and Shipman's ambition, he offered himself as a collaborator. Together they made the version of "Kreutzer Sonata" that Blanche Walsh used. This gave Shipman a tremendous impetus on his career. It had formerly been his intention to teach

school for a living, making occasional attempts on plays in his spare time, but this determined him to gamble everything on his belief that he could write plays.

But the nature of his product had to be determined cold-bloodedly at the start—whether he would be suicidally courageous and write from the inspiration of his immersion in Sudermann, Strindberg and Ibsen, and so revert automatically back to school teaching, or whether to learn to write for the market. Though he was young he was discreet, and calmly scrapped the intellectual and picked George M. Cohan for his model. But if you think it Cohan easy to write like George M. Cohan, try it. The substance of the American successful play may be light, but its technique is tricky. Shipman found he had to learn a new alphabet by which to try it, and so greatly was he animated by the commendable desire to succeed that he put all his considerable stock of patience, shrewdness and enterprise to the task of learning it. In the fifteen years that have elapsed between that decision and his arrival this year as one of Broadway's most successful playwrights he has written nearly fifteen plays. Four of them were done in collaboration with Julie Lippman. They met chiefly with indifferent success, but out of each he has distilled something for his bag of tricks. The mystery of popular success has yielded up its secrets to him one by one, until now he comes as close to having the formula for the American popular play as is possible.

Now, having perfected the mechanics of production, Shipman is prepared for the next logical step—which is quantity production. How inefficient to merely produce a play at a time, when the same principle is applicable to many plays! The backward individualistic system of the theatre needs to be revised in favor of the progressive factory idea. How, then, can we keep our forty-five theatres filled with plays? Shipman is working out his idea now in this manner. He has plotted out the ideas for four plays, which he has turned over to four collaborators. With each collaborator he sketches out the rise of the action in each scene, leaving him to clothe the skeleton with dialogue and incident. After this has been successfully accomplished with each collaborator he returns to the first one for a revision of what has been done. In this way he is the directing intelligence, he is relieved of routine work and is enabled to make four plays yield royalties where only one yielded it before. Of course, four is a small number of plays to start with. But there is no reason why they cannot be produced in even larger quantities. Surely no business man can regard the arts disrespectfully after this!

Mr. Shipman reached languidly into a drawer and brought out a contract, which he contemplated thoughtfully. "They offer me ten thousand dollars for a scenario," he remarked. "I offered them the same series of scenarios three years ago at a thousand dollars apiece and was refused by them. I believe I shall not sell them for more than fifteen thousand apiece."

But, with all this glittering achievement, Mr. Shipman is burdened by an unsatisfied longing to write an intellectual play. In it, we suspect, Mr. Shipman will feel himself under no

compulsion to be diverting and clever, and the result is hard to contemplate. We would plead with him in the name of the forty-five theatres to which he owes a plain duty to give up this profitless idea—but Mr. Shipman clings to it with the tenacity of a suppressed desire.

"Twelfth Night" at French Theatre This Week

The company located at the French Theatre du Vieux Coubert, whose season rapidly draws to a close, is to revive its one Shakespearean play, "Twelfth Night," this week.

"Twelfth Night" was acted by the company in its repertoire last season, and the present revival is more or less in response to the demand of its patrons for its repetition.

The cast follows: Orsino, played by Henry Durtall; Sebastian, by Renee Bouquet; Toby, by Romaine Bouquet; Andrew Aguecheek, by Louis Jovet; Malvolio, by Jacques Copeau; Olivia, by Valentine Tessier; Viola, by Suzanne Bing; and Maria, by Jane Lory.

Benefit for Catholic Actors' Guild March 2

At the benefit performance for the Catholic Actors' Guild of America, to be given next Sunday evening, March 2, at the Cohan & Harris Theatre, under the personal direction of George M. Cohan, the following stage stars will appear: Tessa Kosta, Sallie Fisher, George White, Green and Blyler; Frank Bacon, Chauncey O'Leary, Elizabeth Murray, Mollie King, Emmet Corrigan, Joseph Cawthorn and Julia Sanderson.

Tagore Matinee at Greenwich Village Theatre

Catherine du Pont will give the third of her matinees at the Greenwich Village Theatre on Tuesday afternoon, February 25, consisting of selections from Tagore and three of the Noh and Lyric Dramas of Japan.

Miss du Pont will give a special programme Sunday evening, March 2, the bill including Tagore's "Chitra," "The Fruit Gathering," "The Crescent Moon," "Gitanjali" and "The Gardener."

AMUSEMENTS

"FROM THE RISE OF THE CURTAIN you laugh and Marvel at this SKY SCRAPER OF AMUSEMENTS"
—GLOBE
Charles Dillingham's
"Everything"
The Colonial Super-Spectacle
AT THE
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WORLD'S BIGGEST SHOW
AT THE LOWEST PRICES
MATINEES EVERY DAY
10 Musical Shows in One
100 Novelties 1000 People

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212 Avenue Broadway to Christopher St.
Eves. 8:30. Matins. Wed. and Sat., 2:30.
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HOBOKEN
"Is Full of Solid Laughs."
A SPARKLING SATIRICAL COMEDY
Greenwich Village Theatre—Special
Catherine du Pont
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TO-NIGHT 8:15
"Miss Du Pont carries her audience with her into the Spirit World."
—Telegraph
Tickets \$2.50 to \$1. Box Office & Tyson's

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MONTAUK Regular Popular Prices
JOHN CORE Presents
The Musical Comedy Sensation
THE MONTAUK
By Fred de Gasse and Sylvia Hein.
With the Original N. Y. Cast and Her Perfect 35 Chorus.
No Increase in Montauk Prices.

CHAUNCEY OLCOTT IN
"The Voice of McConnell."
WEEK OF MARCH 3rd.

MAJESTIC Matinees Wed. & Sat.
Week Starting To-Morrow Evening A. H. WOODS presents
FLORENCE REED
ROADS OF DESTINY
CHANNING POLLOCK (Suggested by O. Henry's Short Story of the Same Title)
Direct from 3 months' run at the New Theatre, New York.
TO-DAY—2 REHEARSALS—2
Next Week, WILLIAM COLLIER "Nothing But Love"

COLUMBIA
B'WAY and 47th ST.
NEW SHOW EVERY WEEK
TO-DAY at 2:15, 2:30 & 4:15
COMMENCING TO-MORROW AFTERNOON
GEORGE STONE and ETTA PILLARD
AND THE SOCIAL MAIDS
Twice Daily—Moderate Prices—Bookings

CARNEGIE HALL.
Friday Evening, February 28th.
PROGRAM OF DANCES BY
Chalif's Pupils
Tickets at 163 West 57th St.
(Opposite Carnegie Hall.)

RIVERSIDE B'WAY
37th St. & 11th Ave. Phone Spring 4409.
Columbia Theatre, 2:15 & 8:15. Week of Feb. 24.
Management Extraordinary!
Hopeless Emotional Year of Wages and Reverses.
MME.
PETROVA
Sensational Beauty: Cinema Queen: Returns to the Film: Love—Vauville.
ROBERTA DUNCAN SISTERS VIVIAN
"THE MEMORY BOOK" with
FRANCIS—Nordstrom & Pinkham—W.M.
MABEL McCANE
Supported by Grant & Wing and Al Weston.
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Frances Starr Presents Mr. Belasco in 'Tiger! Tiger!'

By Harriette Underhill

Frances Starr is a sweet and gentle girl. When you meet her she puts her hand straight out and grasps yours firmly and gazes at you with a sort of wistful look which seems to say, "Please be nice to me."

When we went to see Frances Starr at the Belasco Theatre the other night we were simply keeping a promise made to her mother long ago; for we have known her many years, though she never knew us.

It happened like this: Miss Starr wished to be an actress and we wished to be an actress. Miss Starr lived in Albany and we lived in New York. So she became a member of the Proctor Stock Company and they sent her to New York. We were sent to Albany and there we heard all about Frances, the girl with so much talent and pluck.

Soon we became acquainted with Mrs. Starr and she showed us a picture of Frances inscribed: "To my darling mamma from her little girl." And Mrs. Starr made us promise that when we returned to New York we would go to see "her little girl."

But, when we did return, we were so busy looking for an engagement that we had no chance, and then we went away for a season, and when we came back there was Miss Starr playing in "The Music Master," almost a star, and the "Rose of the Rancho" followed quickly, and then she was a star, and

we never dared approach her, not knowing that she would be as she really is—totally unspoiled.

We told her all this, seated in her dressing room after the curtain had fallen on Sallie for the last time.

"Yes," said Miss Starr musingly, "that all seems so terribly long ago. I came to New York and started to work for \$10 a week, out of which I lived and furnished my own gowns. I rehearsed each day and played two performances. Besides that I made my own clothes."

"Fortunately, I played maids, mostly, so I had to have only a black dress and a cap and apron. My parts consisted of fourteen sides of doorbell cues, as a rule, and I got so I would jump every time I heard a bell ring. Later I was raised to \$15 a week and I was so afraid I wasn't doing well enough to deserve it, and trembled each week for fear they would let me go."

"And then, finally, Mr. Belasco gave me my chance. Of course, I realize how lucky it was that he should have noticed me; otherwise, I might still be struggling. Mr. Belasco is kind and gentle and sweet and lovely, but—but he insists on absolute obedience and—he makes you work and work seriously."

"I never have gone out at night because it was instilled in me by Mr. Belasco that after the performance was over an actress needed to rest. I never could go out to tea because it inter-

fered with my dinner and I must eat regularly. So, you see, I never have gone about at all and I know very little of the restaurants and places of amusement in New York.

"My life has been absolutely devoted to my work and while I may have missed a great deal, I have been very happy, and furthermore, I could not remain under Mr. Belasco's tuition and do any differently. It is what he demands in return for guiding our footsteps along the thorny histrionic paths."

"And I want you to meet him. Here he is!" and before we could say, "No, don't; we are afraid to meet him," Miss Starr dragged him in. We rose to our feet, all ready to fly if he scowled at us, as he well might, at being thus rudely interrupted.

And this is what really happened: Mr. Belasco lowered his head so that his snow-white hair fell down over his coal-black eyes, and looked at us and then he spoke, "I read everything you write," he said, "and I want to know how you happen to have such an intimate knowledge of the stage and the wings and the dressing rooms. Have you been on the stage?"

"Yes, Mr. Belasco," we said, "thank you kindly, we have."

"And why did you not remain on the stage?" he asked.

"Because," we murmured, "we got tired of going from office to office only to be told that there was nothing open but the lead in a No. 5 company of 'Lena Rivers,' which expected to play small towns in Canada."

"You should have been an actress," said the great Belasco firmly.

"We should love to have been one, only you never notice us. And all the while we were crying Blanche

New Plays This Week

THURSDAY—At the Republic Theatre Arthur Hopkins will present Marjorie Rambeau, by arrangement with A. H. Woods, in a new play by Leighton Graves Osmon called "The Fortune Teller." The play has been staged by Arthur Hopkins, and in the cast in support of Miss Rambeau are Hugh Dillman, Robert Vaughan, E. L. Fernandez, Grace Goodall, Eleanor Montell, Edna Archer Crawford, Winifred Wellington and Irene Shirley.

Bates's parol in "The Darling of the Gods," we prayed that you might suddenly note our great talent and beauty, which lay concealed under our Japanese make-up, and say: 'There is the nucleus of a great star. Come to my office to-morrow.'

"I probably should have said it if you had come to me. And now let me tell you something. No one ever appeals to me in vain. I am the most approachable person in the world and if I can detect any reason whatever for so doing, I give each applicant a chance."

"We are going to put that in our story and from now on you will be besieged by young persons who have taken you at your word," we cried.

Mr. Belasco shrugged his shoulders. "I never say anything I do not mean." And then we spoke of "Tiger! Tiger!" We knew that it was the story of a little cock, who had a love affair with an M. P. and who continually stated that she was not good enough for him. Now, all of the cocks that we have known are naughty persons who feel that if they marry anything less than an M. P. it will have to be a morganatic marriage. So we could

not understand Sallie's attitude until we saw the play.

"Of course," agreed Mr. Belasco, "Miss Starr plays Sallie exactly as I know she must have been. Most actresses would make her jaunty and flippant and coy. She never should be anything but fearful and shy and pathetic."

"I made all of her clothes myself," said Miss Starr proudly. "Now, don't tell me they look like it, for I really can make very nice things when I try. But I knew just the sort of things Sallie would choose out of her \$2 a month. Poor little thing! She was trying to look stylish to attract the man she loved. And after all she lost him because she lost her head and let him know that she was a cook. He loved the mystery—the elusiveness."

"Which only goes to prove that you never can hold a man by telling him the truth."

We laughed—Mr. Belasco looked serious.

"I should like to say that it isn't true—only I know that it is." And then the great Belasco himself helped us on with our coat, took us to the stage door and called a taxi for us.

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THE WORLD'S TWO GREATEST ENTERTAINMENTS
WINTER GARDEN 42nd St. & 7th Ave. Phone Spring 4409.
Mainstage Tues. Thurs. and Sat. at 8. 12th St. & 7th Ave. Phone Spring 4409.
LIE & J. J. SHUBERT Present The Winter Garden's Midwinter Extravaganza.
MONTE CRISTO, JR. Staged by J. C. Hoffman.
TO-NIGHT SUNDAY TO-NIGHT ALWAYS THE BEST SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENT IN NEW YORK

AL JOLSON AND HIS ORIGINAL COMPANY OF 150 MEN. LIE & J. J. SHUBERT Present. The Greatest War Extravaganza.
SINBAD Created by the Gnomes With Fun.
SPECIAL—To-morrow Night The Greatest War Extravaganza.
Philip Gibbs will speak between the acts of "Sinbad."

SELWYN THEATRE W. 42 St. Tel. Bryant—47.
Eves. 8:30. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:30.
Jane Cowl in The Crowded Hour By Edgar Selwyn and Channing Pollock

MAXINE ELLIOTT'S Theatre, West 39 St.
Eves. 8:30. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:30.
TEA for 3 By Roi Cooper Megrue. A MENTAL COCKTAIL

NORA BAYES THEATRE 4th St. W. Phone Bryant 722.
Eves. 8:30. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:30.
NORA BAYES In Her Juvenile Musical Play
LADIES FIRST To-night at 8:15 Sunday Concert
WILLIAM GORDON DOOLEY George Whiting and Sadie Burt Ruby Marquand and Ray Jett Band AND 12 OTHER BIG ACTS.

3rd MONTH A Musical Play—Different
SOMEBODY'S SWEETHEART By Alvaro Price and Antonio DePanno.
By Alvaro Price and Antonio DePanno.
CENTRAL 47th & W'way
Eves. 8:15. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:15.

5th MONTH The Musical Jostle
SOME TIME With ED WYNN
By Ed Johnson Young and Rudolf Friml.
CASINO B'way & 39th St.
Eves. 8:15. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:15.

TO-NIGHT at 8:15 Sunday Concert
A SMASHING BILL OF HEADLINERS 14 STARS

NEW CENTURY MIDNIGHT WHIRL NEW YORK'S ONLY EXCLUSIVE AFTER THEATRE REVUE

PLAYHOUSE WEST 47th St. Phone Bryant 2628.
MATINEES WED. & SAT. 2:30.
EXTRA MAT. THURSDAY FEB. 27th

ALICE BRADY PERSONALLY IN THE SUCCESS OF THE SEASON
FOREVER AFTER ONE OF DAVID MORRIS.

GOOD MORNING JUDGE LONDON AND NEW YORK'S BIGGEST MUSICAL COMEDY HIT
WITH GEORGE MOLLIE CHARLES 30 HASSELL KING 1 KING 10 OTHERS
SHUBERT THEATRE 44th ST. W. OF B'WAY
Eves. 8:15. Matins. Wed. & Sat., 2:15.

BOHEMIAN GIRL 48th St. Theatre Just East of B'way. Eves. 8:30. Matins. Thursday and Sat., 2:30.

THE BIG PUNCH IS THERE.—Globe.
A Play of Mother Love.

THE NET "GRIPPING."—Journal.
"ABSORBING."—Eve. Sun.
"ROMANTIC."—Herald.